

# MINUTES

## Tuesday, Sept.15, 2015

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### PRESENT:

Elliot Bell-Krasner  
Michael Commisso  
Jolande Goldberg  
Martha Harris  
Susan Hellman  
William Hendrickson

Vanessa Herndon  
Linda Lovell  
Ann Marie Maloney  
Elizabeth McCall  
Carolyn Meza  
McArthur Myers

Gail Rothrock  
Allen Schirmer  
Danny Smith  
Anna Stillner  
Nancy Tingen  
Tobin Tracey  
Patricia Washington  
Richard Webber

**EXCUSED:** Ann-Marie Maloney, Margaret Wood

**UNEXCUSED:** Melinda Barnes, Anthony DeRigge, Michael Hobbs, Radka Mavrova

**CITY STAFF:** Al Cox, J. Lance Mallamo, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria

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### CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Bill Hendrickson called to order the meeting of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) at **7:35 pm** at Lloyd House, 220 North Washington

### JUNE 16, 2015 MINUTES

Motioned by MacArthur Myers, seconded by Elliot Bell-Krasner to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2015 meeting subject to two changes- Approved, Unanimous.

### RAMSAY HOMES

Bill Hendrickson reported that at the City Council Public Hearing on the Ramsay Homes issue held the previous Saturday, City Council voted 5-2 to overturn the unanimous Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review (BAR) decision that denied a Demolition permit for the Ramsay Homes. Mr. Hendrickson indicated that it appeared a compromise, retain 1 or 2 of the buildings

may yet be possible, but that this would be the subject of future discussion with the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

Gail Rothrock, representative of the Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF) informed HARC members that the previous evening HAF had authorized financing to initiate a legal action against the City of Alexandria in Circuit Court on the grounds that City Council did not adhere to proper procedures in evaluating the demolition application. Specifically, HAF is concerned that financial and economic considerations relating to the construction or rehabilitation of affordable housing, as well as future development of the site, were discussed in the evaluation, while consideration of the four criteria for historical significance were not.

Elliott Bell-Krasner described the frustration of some City Council members with ARHA's presentation of historical information, after BAR review of the project. He also reiterated that there was an extensive discussion on the economics of the issue despite the fact that the issue should not have been considered in determining a demolition-permit for buildings with a City-designated Historic District.

An extensive discussion between members ensued but it was agreed that HARC needed to wait for ARHA's next move in supporting alternative preservation strategies. Michael Commisso reminded HARC members that the Sec. 106 process required by ARHA as part of the Ramsay Homes listing on the National Register of Historic Places has yet to be completed. Elizabeth McCall suggested that HARC should continue to support preservation of the Ramsay Homes in the ongoing discussion. It was generally agreed to by members that the Commission is disappointed with the City Council decision, but looks forward to commenting on future options and the preservation of other historic resources in the Parker-Gray neighborhood in the future.

Patricia Washington stressed that the interpretation of African-American heritage needs to be further promoted in the City of Alexandria. One possible option, using a portion of the 'Ramsay Homes' buildings or site for gallery and exhibition space of the Alexandria Black History Museum, was also discussed.

**MOTION:** By Tracey Tobin, 2nd by Elliott Bell-Krasner

To express disappointment by HARC with the City Council decision to overturn the unanimous BAR determination denying a Demolition Permit for the Ramsay Homes.  
Approved 21-0-1, Patricia Washington abstaining.

## **CONFEDERATE NAMES AND SYMBOLS**

An extended discussion concerning Confederate issues was expressed concerns about the eradication of parts of more controversial Alexandria's heritage, and the costs in both financial and human terms of changing street names and removing statues and artworks which honor Confederate dead. Mr. Mallamo informed the Commission on recent actions of City Council to discontinue flying the First National Flag of the Confederacy on two days per year, and the creation of a new Civil War Committee to review and make recommendations to City Council on how to proceed with this issue. He also reiterated that the City will take no position on the Marshall House plaque erected by the Sons and Daughters of Confederate Soldiers.

Commission members agreed that this was an extremely important issue and that HARC should be encouraging the community conversation concerning the Civil War and helping to lead a path forward.

**MOTION:** BY Danny Smith; 2nd by MacArthur Myers and Elliot Bell-Krasner to request that the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission be designated as a participant on the Civil War Monuments and Symbols Review Committee, with one seat on the new group to be formed by City Council.

Approved: Unanimous

## **517 PRINCE STREET**

Lance Mallamo and Susan Hellman provided background and current status of the proposal to preserve this important property and HARC members reviewed the memo from City manager Mark Jinks dated August 18, 2015. Generally the Commission expressed support for the initiative to preserve the property, one of Alexandria's oldest and most significant buildings. However, there was disagreement on how best to achieve this goal, with several members expressing reservations about Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's acquisition and operation of the property. Nancy Tingen expressed reservations about NVRPA stewardship of properties under its care in Alexandria, including the poor conditions and upkeep of facilities at the Great Waves Water Park. The letters, one from a former Director of Carlyle House, expressed concern over the addition of the 517 Prince Street property to NOVA, when Carlyle House and the adjacent bank building are in need of great repair, including a new fire suppression system. Both Danny Smith and Gail Rothrock expressed concern that a rehab of these two buildings should be included in any lease extension. Other HARC members expressed support that this was a creative and efficient way to achieve preservation of one of the City's most significant landmarks. However, there was general consensus that leveraging the purchase of what NVRPA calls "Murray's Livery" to a 30-year lease extension at Great Waves Water Park was not appropriate at this time and warranted further consideration.

Member Martha Harris suggested that the National trust for Historic Preservation should be contacted for its consideration of acquiring the structure and that more financial information be provided at the next meeting concerning the costs to operate the property, and the impact on other historic sites that may receive less resources due to its acquisition.

## **OHA UPDATES**

Lance Mallamo reported that New staff appointments had recently been made, including Gretchen Bulova as Deputy Director, Lisabeth Willams as Acting Director of Gadsby's Tavern Museum and Benjamin Skolnik as Archaeologist. Mr. Mallamo further informed members that the department was just beginning the 2017 budget process and that all departmental performance goals in its 2016 work plan had been achieved or exceeded.

## **HARC PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR**

Deferred to next meeting

## **MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

Danny Smith announced the inauguration of history discussions at John Strongbow Tavern. Proceeds from the first discussion were contributed to Lee-Fendall House. The discussions will be held monthly.

Patricia Washington announced that Visit Alexandria will be releasing visitor statistics. The premiere of "Mercy Street" will be held at the Alexandria film festival on November 11, 2015.

Michael Commisso announced that all alleys have been inventoried and that a presentation will be made to National Trust conference attendees on November 5, 2015

Susan Hellman announced the Del Ray preservation conference on September 18, 2015 and Art on the Avenue the first Saturday of October.

Carlyle House announced details of their Scottish Festival, an Outlander tea and a Zombie walk for Halloween.

McArthur Myers gave a handout of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Fort Ward management plan. The meeting was chaired by Councilman John Michael Chapman. It was a very good, cooperative meeting. All present felt the road map is there to follow and things seem to be moving forward.

Torpedo Factory announced the international year of Light. The event held at the Torpedo Factory featured a geodesic globe reacting to movements from dancers, singers and musicians. Alexandria Historical Society presented their lecture schedule for 2015-16. New this year is a \$5 admission fee for non-members.

Historic Alexandria Foundation announced a wine tasting fundraiser for November 7, 2015.

Alexandria Archaeology Commission announced they had reviewed the renovation plans for the museum. Elections are forthcoming.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Michael Commisso reported that work on the alley project was proceeding and that the results would be shared in a presentation at the upcoming National Trust for Historic Preservation conference to be held in Washington, D.C. November 3-6.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be at Lloyd House on October 20, 2015

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13PM

Respectfully submitted,

J. Lance Mallamo, Director, OHA

Linda Lovell, Member of

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission